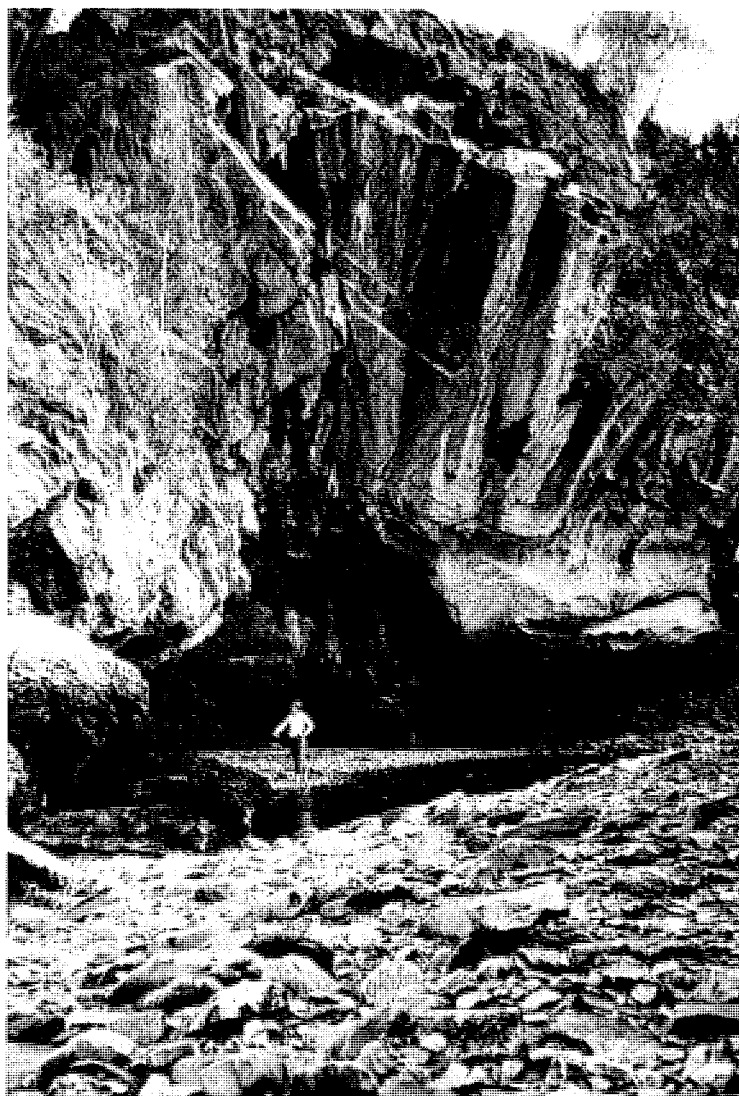
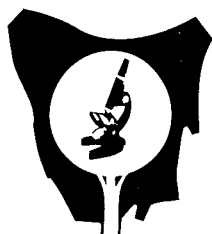


an atlas of
TASMANIAN KARST

Volume 1



by
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CONTENTS

VOLUME ONE

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	4
<i>Summary</i>	5

PART A

KARST SYSTEMS: A TASMANIAN CONTEXT

1	The nature of karst systems	9
	A very special place and a very special challenge	9
	Scope of this report	9
	The classification of karst environments	16
	The karst systems level	19
	The karst landform and landform assemblage level	25
	The landform contents level	34
	Human use and aesthetic values of karst	42
2	An introduction to Tasmanian karst systems	45
	Lithological systems	45
	Structural systems	54
	Climatic systems	57
	Solvent systems	61
	Denudation systems	66
	Topographic systems	67
	Exposure style systems	69
	Time	70
	Environmental systems as determinants of Tasmanian karst geodiversity	71

PART B

AN ATLAS OF TASMANIAN KARST AREAS

	Introduction and keys	74
3	North-West Tasmania	
	Introduction	85
	Carbonate rock outcrops	97
	Concluding remarks	186
4	Western Tasmania	188
	Introduction	188
	Carbonate rock outcrops	190
	Concluding remarks	255

VOLUME TWO

5	South-West Tasmania	
	Introduction	5
	Carbonate rock outcrops	20
	Concluding remarks	105
6	South-East Tasmania	
	Introduction	107
	Carbonate rock outcrops	121
	Concluding remarks	177

7	North-East Tasmania	
	Introduction	178
	Carbonate rock outcrops	190
	Concluding remarks	240
8	Bass Strait Islands	
	Introduction	241
	Carbonate rock outcrops	246
	Concluding remarks	280

PART C

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

9	The management of Tasmania’s karst estate	
	The need for a systems approach	282
	Towards karstcare	283
	Some management issues in Tasmania’s karsts	285
	Forekarsting	296
	Inventory and management of individual karst areas	297
	Landforms as heritage	305
	Conclusions	312

Appendix 1	Attributes of Tasmanian karst areas.	314
-------------------	--------------------------------------	-----

Bibliography	327
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LIST OF FIGURES

VOLUME 1

1.1	Vanishing Falls, a major streamsink in southwest Tasmania	8
1.2	Sharlands Organ, Kubla Khan Cave, Mole Creek karst	8
1.3	Sinkhole degradation of farmland, Mole Creek karst	10
1.4	Corroded upper surface of limestone, Railton karst	11
1.5	Some processes that may cause accelerated ground-surface collapse	11
1.6	Lake Timk, Mt Anne-Upper Weld River karst	13
1.7	Contrast between apparent and actual drainage basins, Mole Creek karst	14
1.8	Variation of catchments with discharge, Croesus area, Mole Creek karst	15
1.9	Exposure of thin residual soils by tree-fall, Precipitous Bluff karst	17
1.10	Some surface karst landforms in Tasmania	26
1.11	Some underground karst landforms in Tasmania	31
1.12	The contents of some surface karst landforms in Tasmania	35
1.13	The contents of some Tasmanian karst caves	39
1.14	Some human use and aesthetic values of Tasmanian karst areas	42
2.1	Some Tasmanian carbonate rocks	47
2.2	Sections through the Gordon Group rocks	49
2.3	Distribution of sediments on the Tasmanian shelf	53
2.4	Contrasts in rock structure and their influence on cave morphology	55
2.5	Medium scale complex enclosed depressions	58
2.6	Incipient cirque formed in dolomite, Mt Anne-Upper Weld River karst	59
2.7	Extent of past glaciation in the Mt Anne area	60
2.8	Variations in karren formed by meteoric waters	62
2.9	Variations in coastal karren	65
2.10	Some medium-scale and large-scale landforms in coastal karsts	68
B1	Regions within Tasmania	82
B2	Key to Tasmap 1:100,000 sheets	83
B3	Key to Karst Atlas map sheets	84
3.1	Hunter (Welcome) sheet	89
3.2	Nelson Bay (Sandy Cape) sheet	90
3.3	Arthur River sheet	91
3.4	Circular Head sheet	92
3.5	Inglis (Hellyer) sheet	93
3.6	Sophia sheet	94

3.7	Mersey sheet	95
3.8	Forth sheet	96
3.9	Closed depression on the floor of Dismal Swamp	117
3.10	Map of Gunns Plains tourist cave	162
3.11	Hydrogeological map of the Mole Creek karst	(inside back cover)
3.12	Map of the Croesus Cave, Mole Creek	(inside back cover)
3.13	Section through the Eugenana Beds	184
4.1	Arthur River sheet	189A
4.2	Pieman sheet	189B
4.3	Sophia sheet	189C
4.4	Franklin sheet	189D
4.5	Cape Sorell sheet	189E
4.6	Map of Snowy Mountain Cave, Mt Cripps	200
4.7	Map of The Sanctuary, Blackwater Creek	202
4.8	Meander cut-off cave, Nelson River	246
4.9	Map of Railway Cave (Hamoik cave), Juke-Darwin	248

VOLUME 2

5.1	Cape Sorell sheet	9
5.2	Spero sheet	10
5.3	Franklin sheet	11
5.4	Olga sheet	12
5.5	Port Davey sheet	13
5.6	Old River sheet	14
5.7	Wedge sheet	15
5.8	Nive sheet	16
5.9	Tyenna sheet	17
5.10	Huon sheet	18
5.11	South Cape (and Southeast Cape) sheet	19
6.1	Nive sheet	111
6.2	Tyenna sheet	112
6.3	Wedge sheet	113
6.4	Huon sheet	114
6.5	South Cape (and Southeast Cape) sheet	115
6.6	D'Entrecasteaux sheet	116
6.7	Derwent sheet	117
6.8	Lake Sorell sheet	118
6.9	Little Swanport	119
6.10	Nugent (Prosser) sheet	120
7.1	Mersey sheet	180
7.2	Meander sheet	181
7.3	Tamar sheet	182
7.4	Pipers sheet	183
7.5	South Esk sheet	184
7.6	Lake Sorell	185
7.7	Cape Portland sheet	186
7.8	St Pauls sheet	187
7.9	Break O Day sheet	188
7.10	Freycinet sheet	189
8.1	King Island sheet	244
8.2	Flinders Island sheet	245
9.1	Cave reserve boundary design	284
9.2	Water quality data variation according to sampling interval	287
9.3	Road collapse in the Junee-Florentine karst	288
9.4	Some impacts of limestone quarrying on karst caves	290
9.5	Cave reserve boundary design, Gunns Plains and Marble Hill karsts	291
9.6	Karren shattered by fire	292
9.7	Planning reserve facilities	294
9.8	Sensitivity zones, Junee-Florentine karst	302
9.9	Changes to Mt Field National Park boundary, 1950	304
9.10	Map of polygonal karst at Mole Creek	309

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Part A Karst Systems: A Tasmanian Context

Tasmania's karst areas offer a variety of economic, scientific, educational and recreational resources, and, carefully managed, can continue to do so. The essential characteristics of karst stem from the fact that particular types of rock, commonly limestone or dolomite, have the capacity to be dissolved by natural waters, allowing seepage water and streams to be diverted underground. In the most fully expressed karst, integrated cave systems form the focus of underground drainage networks that are highly efficient. Karst areas offer a variety of heritage values but also pose a range of geomorphic hazards that include soils that are sometimes vulnerable to erosion or sudden collapse, and vulnerable aquifers.

Streams in underground solution channels often flow in directions that cannot be predicted from the surface topography. These streams have the capacity to rapidly transfer localised impacts to the wider karst system and, hence, the aquifers are easily polluted. This can have important implications both for the protection of nature conservation values and for sustainable land management. The need to safeguard hydrological regimes and the soil and vegetation systems that condition water quantity and chemistry must be taken fully into account in developing and implementing management strategies if important heritage values are to be safeguarded and society's exposure to most of the geomorphic hazards that exist in many karst areas is to be minimised. The three-dimensional world beneath our feet is not a separate world. Rather, it is an extension of the surface world, and one highly integrated with the surface world.

Karst environments result from a complex interplay between climatic, topographic, hydrologic, biologic and temporal factors and trends. Hence, a systems approach provides the most adequate means of seeking to come to terms both with the karst environment and with the requirements for determining appropriate uses and sustainable management of karst environments. The focus of this study is upon the maintenance of geodiversity in karst environments. A karst area classification system has been developed to facilitate the identification of sites of geoconservation significance. This involves analysis at four levels: the *Karst Systems* level, or the mix of basic environmental controls that condition the evolution of any karst; the *Karst Landform and Landform Communities* level, or the individual species and communities of landforms that exist in any area; the *Landform Contents* level, which includes the various geological, biological and other phenomena found in caves and sinkholes; and *Human Use and Aesthetics*.

The environmental systems that form the broad parameters within which Tasmania's karst has evolved are addressed in Chapter 2. These systems have largely controlled the nature of the landforms and landform communities that have developed, and the variations within them. In a sense, the system determinants can reasonably be utilised in a manner similar to that in which bio-regions are used to identify the broad environmental contexts from which representative examples of species and communities appropriate for conservation can be identified and selected. The principal difference is that while the karst environmental systems provide the framework from within which examples should be selected, the karst system controls are seldom spatially exclusive; rather, they overlap and interact with one another. Herein lies the origin of Tasmania's karst geodiversity, and the challenge to developing a comprehensive yet workable geoconservation strategy for karst phenomena.

Part B An Atlas of Tasmanian Karst Areas

Chapters 3 to 8 provide a brief overview of the 300 carbonate rock areas recorded in, respectively, the north-west, west, south-west, south-east, and north-east of Tasmania, and on some Bass Strait islands. Each area and its catchment has been depicted on maps at 1:100,000 scale that have been photo-reduced for presentation here but are available at the original scale for digitising to Geographical Information Systems, or for other purposes. The broad systems context of each area is tabulated and a very brief summary of any known karst phenomena is appended. A brief introduction to each chapter provides a regional setting.

Part C Discussion and Conclusions

Chapter 9 provides a brief synthesis of management issues that arise in Tasmania's karst, including the vulnerability of soil and groundwater systems, accelerated sinkhole collapse affecting agricultural land and sometimes roads, refuse dumping in sinkholes, the risk of agricultural chemicals entering groundwater systems, the need for improved streamside management, issues related to limestone quarrying and forestry activities, and the management of caves used for recreational caving and commercial tourism. The inadequacy of managing arbitrarily-defined land parcels that have been superimposed on a highly

interactive and systemic environment, is discussed: there is a need for a trans-tenure perspective on management of such systems. The desirability of developing community-based karstcare programs is addressed, together with the need to upgrade the system of formal reservation to protect some phenomena of major geoheritage significance.

Initial steps towards the development of predictive modelling as an aid to strategic planning are discussed, together with approaches to the management of individual karst areas including the desirability of karst inventory and sensitivity mapping processes. General principles in geoheritage conservation are discussed and a preliminary list of karst landform species recorded to date from Tasmania's karsts is appended. The assessment of conservation status at the systems, landform assemblage, and individual landform species levels are addressed, using examples.